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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ
12TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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June 24, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

This Wednesday, the Natural Resources Committee will hold a full committee hearing on H.R. 2499, "The Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2009". Although this bill includes some changes to the bill H.R. 900, which was introduced in the last Congress, the current legislation in no way adheres to the principles that you wisely laid out for any bill of this nature to move forward.

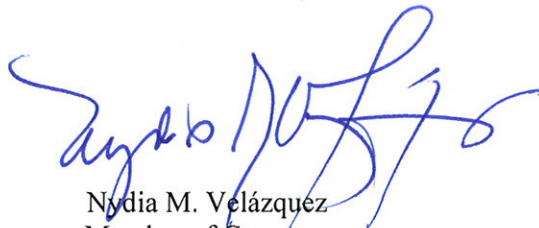
H.R. 2499 was not the product of a drafting process that was inclusive, transparent nor fair. The closed drafting process used to develop H.R. 2499 reflects a lack of collegiality and a mindset that seems dismissive of other points of view. This approach must not be sanctioned. It would be particularly unfortunate for such a non-transparent approach to be applied to an issue that is highly controversial and so central to the lives of all Puerto Ricans. I continue to believe that the Leadership's judgment in the last Congress was correct: namely that any Puerto Rico status bill must be a product of consensus. H.R. 2499 fails that test and, therefore, does not enjoy support from Mr. Serrano, Mr. Gutierrez or me.

Madam Speaker, the deliberation of the fate of four million U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico should not to be taken lightly. In addition to the residents of the island, we should carefully consider the points of view of the four million Puerto Ricans that live amongst our States. The future of Puerto Rico cannot be imposed by this Congress; it must come from the will of the people in Puerto Rico. I suggest that hearings be held in Puerto Rico to make this a truly open process, in which every facet of Puerto Rican society is represented.

H.R. 2499 includes language from two previous bills that did not originate from a consensus process. Instead, those bills were based on a Bush Administration Task Force report. That Task Force was created by Executive Order. Last year, President Obama rejected assertions made in that report and pledged to enable the question of Puerto Rico to be resolved. It is appropriate that before any legislative process resumes, we reach out to the White House and have a dialogue about how we can work together towards a consensus solution.

Madam Speaker, I wholeheartedly support your commitment to fairness, transparency and consensus for this important issue. I look forward to collaborating with all sides in the development of a true self-determination process for Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress